

Mustang, History of a Love Affair

Sixth in a Series
by
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Ford's decision to make and sell the Mustang was arrived at by a hardheaded process. Hard-driving Lee Iacocca, a Ford vice president, and Donald N. Frey figured there was a gap in the market that Ford could fill by providing a bargain-basement sports car for the masses. But unlike most other sports cars, this one was produced on the theory that a lot of people who would like to own a sports car hold back because of the generally prohibitive cost of most models.

The specifications for the Mustang gradually evolved from the accumulated research data. Weight: not more than 2,500 lbs. Length: a true sports car. Long in front, short on the rear deck, not more than 180 inches, and clearing the ground by only 5.2 inches. Engine: peppy six-cylinder. Seating: four passengers, with bucket seats and other sporty touches. Personality: elegant high tuck of the rear wheel to show off the low-slung, sweeping lines making it demure enough for church-going, racy enough for the dragstrip, and modish enough for the country club.

Planning a new car entails elements of serious risk, involving the investment of millions of dollars. Success hinges on predicting three years ahead what consumers will want at a given time, as well as taking into account what competitive companies will be doing to satisfy that want. Assuming that the researchers were correct in their predictions of a specific market demand, could a car be designed and produced in time to take advantage of that new demand? If so, would it attract buyers in the face of the new entries that competitive companies might produce? These were not exceptional questions. These are the same questions Detroit must face and answer every model year.

Throughout 1963, evaluation of market factors continued. The probable impact of the Mustang's features on prospective new car buyers was rechecked. Pricing studies were made in early spring, rechecked in midsummer. In the fall, a special design clinic was held to recheck design decisions.

There was evidence that the Mustang might have a wider market than was at first conceived. The car was developed basically to satisfy the young adult buyer and the multiple-car market, but it proved to be exciting to other kinds of prospects, too. Many couples with young children at their heels were taking long, slow looks at the experimental cars such as Mustang I displayed at car shows.

Accordingly, a special probe was made into a new area of prospective buyers. When a prototype of the car was ready, invitations were extended to 52 couples who had pre-teen

Research of data from "Mustang Guide", by Bill Stone, published by the Benson Printing Co., 1965; and "The Mustang Story" by the Ford Motor Company, Educational Affairs Department, number 5.



children and who owned a single standard-size automobile. They came to the Ford Design Studio in small groups to see the car.

Reaction was spontaneously enthusiastic. But the viewers agreed among themselves that the car was impractical for them. A phenomenon occurred, however, when the price of the car was discussed. Asked to estimate the price, most couples overshot the mark by more than a thousand dollars. On hearing the actual price, they underwent a strange transformation of viewpoint. Husbands and wives went back for a second look at the Mustang, and without exception, began to find reasons why this car really would be practical for them, after all. \$2368 f.o.b. Detroit was the suggested retail price for a completely equipped standard Mustang Hardtop. This price included the following features:

- Wrap around front bumper with bumper guards front and back
- Curved side glass
- Heater (unless ordered without)
- Twice-a-year (or 6000 mile) service schedule
- Front arm rests
- Parallel-action windshield wipers
- Safety-yoke door latches
- Front seat belts (unless ordered without)
- Sports steering wheel
- Self adjusting brakes
- 170 cu. in. 6 cylinder engine
- Cigarette lighter
- 2 automatic courtesy lights
- Glove box light
- Floor shift 3-speed manual transmission

- Deep foam bucket seats
- Padded instrumental panel
- Full wheel covers
- Color-keyed all-vinyl interior
- Color-keyed wall-to-wall carpeting

This and other studies pinpointed the buying attitudes toward which an effective marketing campaign could be aimed. The elements were ready-made. The public had already placed a stamp of approval on the sporty styling of the Mustang. The car had a "performance" look, a road-hugging stance that assured viewers it would handle well, steer and park easily. Couples with children might on first sight question the practicality of the vehicle for them; but on discovering the unexpectedly low price, they would put their wits to work to find reasons why the purchase was feasible. Marketing strategy was worked out accordingly, to take full advantage of these buying attitudes.

The marketing campaign initially stressed the basic Mustang as an economical, practical, and beautiful car with four passenger roominess; that people would find in it all the car they would want or need. Studies revealed this was only the beginning of Mustang possibilities. It was decided to stress the Mustang's versatility. The popular phrase became "Mustang was designed to be designed by you!" A wide range of options was made available on the car to provide a vehicle that could be custom tailored as a hot-blooded sports convertible; a luxurious, vinyl-covered hardtop; or anything in between.

The base of the car's appeal was broadened to include convenience, luxury, and exciting performance options. The range was formidable indeed:

Convenience Options

- 260 cu. in. V-8
- 3 speed Cruise-O-Matic transmission
- Power Steering
- Power Brakes
- White sidewall tires
- Push-button radio
- Backup lights
- Deluxe seat belts front and rear
- Outside rearview mirror
- 2 speed electric wipers and washers
- Tinted windshield

Luxury Options

- Full length console between front seats
- Padded sun visors
- Rocker panel molding
- Deluxe wheel covers with simulated knock-off hubs
- Air conditioner
- Tinted glass
- Vinyl covered hardtop roof
- Accent paint stripe
- Convertible with power-operated top and vinyl tonneau cover

Performance Options

- 289 cu. in V-8
- 4 speed manual transmission
- Rally Pac (tachometer and clock)
- 14 inch wheels and tires
- Heavy duty battery

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